

And then, late on Saturday night, after a week of profound emotion and extraordinary skill, Canada's eleven First Ministers signed the Meech Lake Accord, brought Quebec fully into the Canadian constitutional family, set an agenda for other change, and proved that the skills of compromise and common sense, which the world admires in Canada, still prevail.

I want to focus on two aspects of that process.

The first is a tribute - to the qualities which make this nation work, and the people who apply those qualities with such skill. It is popular to criticize conciliators - and to celebrate the headstrong or the stubborn. Yet no one here would want a Rambo to run your family, or your business, or your country. In fact, for the last year in the world, we have welcomed the end of regimes which ruled through fiat or through force. Those qualities of conciliation are Canada's trademark, and they have never been more evident than in the last week. I was proud of my own Premier, Don Getty, who was a rock through all that tumult. But the man who made it work, was the man at the head of the table. Brian Mulroney was at his best, and proved that toughness and conciliation can go hand in hand.

But the other reality of the Meech Lake debate is that it revealed a discontent - a Canadian malaise - that should alert us to other real problems in the Canadian community. The Meech Lake Accord is not perfect, as no constitutional arrangement is perfect. But it is not so imperfect that it should have generated the anger and the fear that have scarred Canada in this last year. Meech Lake became a lightning rod for grievances across Canada, people who agreed on little else found common cause against Meech Lake. I think we have to ask ourselves why that happened, and what it means we must do now.

For context, let me return to what is happening in the rest of the world. There are profound changes - Europe, whose nation- states fought one another for centuries, is coming together in one massive Common market, that increasingly involves social and political integration.

Asia is an economic powerhouse - modern, innovative, able to apply its population and its power to shape a world that Europe and the Americas once thought it controlled.

In Europe, as the old tensions of the Cold War disappear, new tensions of nationalism arise. Everywhere, the rush of change excites extreme responses - in some religions, in some regions, among people everywhere who feel threatened. Naturally, Canada is not immune to that.

I think we have reached the stage, as a country, where we have to examine some basic assumptions about ourselves. The country has changed more quickly than we have adapted; and, now that Meech Lake has made our constitutional family whole, we have to take a fresh look at who we are as a country, and what we want to become.